

REMARKS

This preliminary amendment is being filed with a Request for Continued Examination. Applicants submit that this preliminary amendment provides a full and complete response to the Final Office Action dated October 20, 2003, having a shortened statutory period for response set to expire on January 20, 2004, and to the Advisory Action dated February 6, 2004. Claims 85-101 have been allowed. Claims 1-84 have been cancelled without prejudice. Applicants reserve the right to subsequently take up prosecution of the claims as originally filed in this application in a continuation, a continuation-in-part and/or a divisional application. Please reconsider the claims pending in the application for reasons discussed below.

In the Advisory Action, the Examiner indicated that amendment filed on December 22, 2003 was not entered because the status of claims 1-31 is missing. Such status has been provided in the amendment provided herein. Accordingly, the case is in condition for allowance.

In the Final Office Action, claims 32, 55-59, 61-67 and 78-84 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(a) as being anticipated by WO 99/54527. Claims 32, 55-59, 61-67 and 78-84, however, have been cancelled without prejudice, thereby rendering the rejection moot.

In the Final Office Action, claims 33-54, 60 and 68-77 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over WO 99/54527 in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,409,903. Claims 33-54, 60 and 68-77, however, have been cancelled without prejudice, thereby rendering the rejection moot.

In the Final Office Action, claims 67 and 68 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent Pub. 2001/0015321 in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,340,633. Claims 67 and 68, however, have been cancelled without prejudice, thereby rendering the rejection moot.

In the Final Office Action, claims 69-77 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent Pub. 2001/0015321 in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,340,633 and U.S. Patent No. 6,409,903. Claims 69-77, however, have been cancelled without prejudice, thereby rendering the rejection moot.

Claims 85-101 have been allowed. Claims 1-84 have been cancelled without prejudice, thereby placing the entire case in condition for allowance.

A supplemental information disclosure was submitted on December 22, 2003 to cite references that were disclosed in a European Search Report dated October 22, 2003 and U.S. Patent No. 6,391,166 and U.S. Patent No. 6,261,433. Applicants believe that none of these references teaches or discloses a method of depositing a metal on a substrate, which includes applying a biasing voltage configured to generate a current that increases over time (or a ramping current) as the substrate is immersed into an electrolyte solution. Accordingly, Applicants maintain that claims 85-101 are in condition of allowance, even in view of these references.

In conclusion, the references cited by the Examiner, neither alone nor in combination, teach, show, or suggest the claimed method or apparatus. Having addressed all issues set out in the office action, Applicants respectfully submit that the claims are in condition for allowance and respectfully request that the claims be allowed.

Respectfully submitted,



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